

# **History of Ishmael Tribes**

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All the Arab historians agree with the tradition that Ishmaelites had been the overwhelming majority among the descendants of Abraham, and the descendants of Abraham from his wives Ketura or Hajun occupied various parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Most of the Ishmaelites stationed within the present Hijaz province of Saudi Arabia or other lands adjoining Hijaz, such as Nafud, Tehama, and parts of the Jordan of the present. We find in the Genesis that God responded to the petition of Abraham about his children, in the following manner:

And he (God) brought him (Abraham) forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. (Gen 15:5 KJV)

There can be no denial of the fact that the Ishmaelites had been an overwhelming majority among the descendants of Abraham, as foretold by the Lord Himself in the following words:

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; **twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.** (Gen 17:20 KJV)

We know that the word of God is an accomplished fact. Hence, the promise of God about exceedingly multiplied progeny from 12 princes of Ishmael must have been fulfilled in making the Ishmaelites a great nation. Obviously, **no great nation could ever live or remain concealed or confined within the so-called**

**Wilderness of Paran in the Sinai Peninsula, as propounded by the Genesis.** One also fails to deduce whether it was more due to the geographic ignorance or due to the prejudice of Israeli writers against their rivals, that they dealt with the progeny of Hagar and Ishmael in a casual manner just as the modern police ends the pursuit of certain absconders with the reports 'missed, believed killed.' The Biblical scholars have always failed to trace out the great nation, the Ishmaelites, living in Sinai Peninsula at any time in the history, nor could they find any remains of the abodes of 12 princes and their progeny there. The factual position of the Ishmaelites enjoying sovereignty over major parts of the Arabian Peninsula with their religious and cultural center at Makkah is also not

acceptable to the Jewish as well as the Christian scholars. Come what may, they are not prepared to accept that Hagar, Ishmael, and their progeny had their initial settlement at Makkah from where their descendants in the later periods shifted to various other parts of Arabia where they always had a supremacy over the non-Ishmaelite tribes. The Western writers mostly try to disprove the contention of the Arabs being the descendants of Abraham, merely on the ground that there is no historical evidence, i.e. a written proof for the same. They also feel obliged to make the scripture true and to deny anything else, which is against the assertions in the Bible. Such writers, therefore, opine that the Arabs are the false claimants of the descendants of Abraham, which Arabs profess only to prove their nobility by establishing

their direct descendants from Abraham.

The present writer, however, ventures to differ emphatically from the afore-stated opinion of the Western writers which seem to be based on their prejudice against the Arabs/Muslims. Such writers have no material evidence to support their contention which is against the true history and the ground facts in the region. As for the written evidence, we may point out that the Arabs were mostly illiterate people who could neither read nor write anything. They, however, had been gifted with strong memory and remembered all their genealogies, the traditions, and the poetry very correctly. No book had ever been written in Arabia before the Qur'an. The inability of the Arabs to record their history in writing, therefore,

cannot deprive them of their glorious past in the Arabian Peninsula nor does it make them dependant on the writings of the others. The Israeli writings can neither disprove the relationship of the major branch among the descendants of Abraham with him nor can anyone deny their existence in the Arabian Peninsula from time immemorial. The Arabs always had well preserved and perfectly memorized record of their genealogies as well as the traditions of the old and no one has any cogent reasons to deny the same. All the nations in the world rely upon their own traditions than on the writings of the rival nations around them. The Arabs never considered the Israelites of any real importance as they had always been a small fry as compared with the Arabs representing the

overwhelming majority among the descendants of Abraham. Although the Bible contains many names of the ancient ancestors settled in different parts of Arabia, yet we reproduce hereunder an independent account of the descendants of Abraham, as given by Flavious Josephus.

## HOW THE NATION OF THE TROGLODYTES WERE DERIVED FROM ABRAHAM BY KETURAH

Abraham after this married Keturah, by whom six sons were born to him; men of courage and of sagacious minds: — Zambran, and Jazar, and Madan, and Madian, and Josabak, and Sous. Now the sons of Sous were Sabathan and Dadan; — the sons of Dadan were Latusim, and Assur, and Luom; — the sons of Madian were



Ephas, and Ophren, and Anoch, and Ebidas, and Eldas. Now, for all these sons and grandsons, Abrhaam contrived to settle them in colonies; and they took possession of Troglodytis, and the country of Arabia the Happy, as far as it reaches to the Red Sea. It is related of this Ophren, that he made war against Libya, and took it; and that his grandchildren, when they inhabited it, called it (from his name) Africa; and indeed Alexander Polyhistor gives his attestation to what here say; who speaks thus: "Cleodemus the prophet, who was also called Malchus, who wrote a history of the Jews, in agreement with the History of Moses, their legislator, relates, that there were many sons born to Abraham by Keturah; nay, he names three of them, Apher, and Surim, and Japhran: that

from Surim was the land of Assyria denominated; and that from the other two (Apher and Japhran) the country of Africa took its name; because these men were auxiliaries to Hercules, when he fought against Libya and Antaeus; and that Hercules married Aphra's daughter, and of her he begat a son, Diodorus; and that Sophon was his son; from whom that barbarous people called Sophacians were denominated." (*The Works of Flavius Josephus, Antiquity of the Jews, Book I, chp. 15, p. 44-45*)

This proves that most of the people in and around the Peninsula were the direct descendants of Abraham, and the Israelites had no primacy over them in respect of their descendance from the said patriarch. Arabia had undoubtedly been the cradle of the human race. The most probable site of

the Garden of Eden was south-east part of the Arabian Peninsula, consisting of Yemen and Hadramawt areas. Makkah, the center of the Peninsula, where Adam built the first house of the Lord on Earth, which was re-constructed by Sheth, Noah, and other Prophet before Abraham. Abraham dedicated his first born and the only son Ishmael to the ancient house of the Lord, and took the suckling child along with his mother to stay there in the service of the Lord. Later on, it was Abraham who rebuilt the walls of Kaaba with the help of Ishmael, the first person ever dedicated to the Lord to stay as a priest at the said house. Ever since the time of Abraham, the Arabs had always been the proud possessors of the house of the Lord, and also the followers in the faith of Abraham. They

broadly struck to the legacy and traditions of Abraham for about 2200 years after him, till the idolatry was introduced by Amr bin Luhayy, sometime after 400 AD at Makkah. The Arabs, therefore, had direct descendance from Abraham and also an unbroken and undisturbed maintenance of the traditions of Abraham. As against this, the Israelites had a gap of about 450 years absence from Canaan, and also from the environments and traditions of Abraham. During all this period, the Israelites remained enslaved and crushed under hard labor at the hands of the Egyptians. They forgot all the teachings and traditions of Abraham and nothing of him could be preserved by them.

With the emancipation of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, Moses

made it mandatory for them to maintain a written record of the law and the traditions of Moses, and also to communicate the same to others. He and other prophets after him infused the spirit of reading and writing in Israel, primarily with an aim to record the law and the history of the nation. No doubt, they made good use of the art; but at the same time their partiality forced them to promote the self-interest of Israel, and to denigrate the rival nations around them. The prophets, the law, and the art of writings had been the only edge of Israel over other nations in the region but alas! they rebelled against the prophets and the Lord, and also distorted the history and the Holy Book by the vile pen of the scribes (...).

Arabs, on the other hand, had always been a great nation as ordained by the

Lord; and they enjoyed sovereignty over the Arabian Peninsula consisting of an area measuring 1.2 million sq miles. They never cared a fig about the perverse writings of the Israelites, nor were they aware of such writings. Anyhow, just to refute the contention of the Israeli and the Christian writers, we shall quote two references from Flavius Josephus, the most authentic historian among the Israelites of the old. While describing the incidence of Abimelech and the episode of Hagar and Ishmael, he has given the following title to his chapter XII, book I, Antiquities of the Jews, in the following manner:

CONCERNING ABIMELECH AND  
CONCERNING ISHMAEL, THE SON  
OF ABRHAM; AND CONCERNING  
THE ARABIANS, WHO WERE HIS  
POSTERITY.

In addition to above, we shall also like to reproduce the contents of para IV under the title, given above, as under:

When the lad was grown up, he married a wife, by birth an Egyptian, from whence the mother was herself derived originally. Of this wife were born to Ismael twelve sons: Nabaoith, Kedar, Abdeel, Mabsham, Idumas, Masmaos, Masaos, Chodad, Theman, Jetur, Hapehsus, Cadmas. These inhabited all the country from Euphrates to the Red Sea, and called it Nabatene. They are an Arabian nation, and name their tribes from these, both because of their own virtue, and because of the dignity of Abraham their father.

There is still another reference in the Antiquities where Josephus narrates

about the birth and the circumcision of Isaac which is as under:

And they circumcised him upon the eighth day and from that time the Jews continue the custom of circumcising their sons within that number of days. But as for the Arabians, they circumcise after the thirteenth year, because **Ismael, the founder of their nation**, who was born to Abraham of the concubine, was circumcised at that age; concerning whom I will presently give a particular account, with great exactness. (p. 44 )

The afore-stated evidence from the house of Israel is enough to refute the false contention of certain writers in the West who profess that the Arabs in Hijaz are not the real progeny of Abraham. As regards the narration



regarding Ishmael's birth from the concubine or his marrying 'a wife by birth an Egyptian', Josephus had a plausible excuse in the following words:

I am under a necessity of relating this history as it is described in the sacred books. (Ibid, *Antiquity of the Jews*, Book III, chp. 5, p. 85).

From the reservations of Josephus, as above, we can conclude that almost all the Jewish and the Christian writers are under the same obligation, and cannot accept the truth even if it stands established in the broad daylight. **The fact is that not only Hijaz, but entire Arabia, Syria, and parts of Africa were inhabited by the descendants of Abraham** but the Israelites can be excused for the reason that they knew nothing about

other regions beyond their own borders. This is why their knowledge about the Ishmaelites does not go beyond the names of 12 sons of Ishmael, about whom they knew nothing beyond the Ishmael's stay in the so-called Wilderness of Paran in Sinai Peninsula. Anyhow, another reference confirming the Ishmaelites as the Arabians carrying spices is made in the story of Joseph and his brothers in the following words:

3. But Judas, being one of Jacob's sons also., seeing some Arabians, of the posterity of Ismael, carrying spices and Syrina wares out of the land of Gilead to the Egyptians, after Reubel was gone, advised his brethren to draw Joseph out of the pit, and sell him to the Arabians; for if he should die among strangers a great way off, they should be freed

from his barbarous action.

(Ibid, *Antiquity of the Jews*, Book II, chp. 3, p. 55).

The ignorance of the Israelites and other historians about the Arabian lands did not end in the ancient past. Even in the 19th century, the position was not much changed. This is evident from the footnote under chap. 11 of Book II of the Antiquities on the page 41. Regarding the pillar of salt standing in the days of Josephus the redactor remarks as under:

I do not know. Its remote situation, at the utmost southern point of the Sea of Sodom, in the wild and dangerous deserts of Arabia, makes it exceeding difficult for inquisitive travellers to examine the place; and for common reports of country people, at a

distance, they are not very satisfactory. In the mean time, I have no opinion of Le Clerc's dissertation or hypothesis about this question, which can only be determined by eye-witnesses. When Christiana princes, so called, lay aside their foolish and unchristian wars and quarrels, and send a body of fit persons to travel over the east, and bring us faithful accounts of all ancient monuments, and procure us copies of all ancient records, at present lost among us, we may hope for full satisfaction in such inquiries, but hardly before. .

(Ibid, *Antiquity of the Jews*, Book I, chp. XI, p. 41).

The Arabian historians have pointed out settlements of 12 sons of Ishmael and their descendants throughout the Arabian Peninsula and historians from the West have also confirmed the

same. A detailed account of the settlements of the descendants of 12 sons of Ishmael can also be found in “Maqalat-e-Sir Syed” (Published by Majlis Taraqye Adab, Lahore, 1963, Pages 167-177). The Arabian map and the history of various tribes of Arabs can be consulted for further satisfaction of the scholars.

The descendants of Ishmael gradually moved to various parts of Arabia especially on southwestern side along the coast of the Red Sea. This part is the actual Paran where Ishmaelites have been living ever since the departure of Ishmael and Hagar from Canaan and they have always been occupying the same region till the present times. The aforesaid areas are presently known as Hijaz province of the Saudi Arabia with Mecca its central place, Capital City, and the all time

Holiest place in the world due to Kaaba being The First House of The Lord on Earth. From time immemorial the Arab traditions and the Muslim literature refers to Mecca valley including all its mountains as Faran. And this is the only place which has been the central abode of the Ishmaelites.

Subsequently, the Ishmaelites started spreading into the entire Arabian Peninsula including southern parts of Iraq and Syria and the present Jordan. They also flanked Canaan / Palestine on the north-eastern as well as the southern sides of excluding Sinai Peninsula. We, therefore, conclude that the areas from Midian to Yemen i.e. major parts of Hijaz and some adjoining areas of Arabia towards the north. The Bible refers to it as under:

“The descendants of Ishmael lived in the territory of Havilah and Shur in the East of Assyria. (Gen. 25:18)

The same is the wilderness of Paran (Gen. 21:21) which has always been the central abode of the Ishmaelites for last 4,000 years. Since the time of Abraham, Mecca has always been the pivotal point of the region which is the Mt. Paran of the Genesis where the first born of Abraham stood before the Lord at the ancient and the first House of the Lord on Earth. Islamic traditions tell us that Adam built Kaaba for the first time and received divine revelations there. After the deluge of Noah, Ibrahim and Ishmael rebuilt Kaaba, and the most of the descendants of Abraham settled in Arabia i.e. around Mecca. The boastful claim of Israel to be the only descendants of Abraham is a false

and farcical propagation of a small faction against majority of the descendants of Abraham holding areas which were more than 2 hundred times the possessions of Israelites in Palestine.